

SOME CIRCUSES OF THE PAST

By C. E. Duple, CHS Historian.

The December (1944) issue of the Bandwagon carried the wording of a newspaper advertisement of the DAYOLHEASALA'S Imperial Railroad Show that appeared in Brantford, Ont., Canada on May 10th, 1902. This is the first time I ever heard of this show so am unable to give any information about it.

I am naming a few other old time circuses that we never see mentioned in circus publications. All appeared at Jeffersonville, Ind., the home town of the writer. In the spring of 1895 (I was a 10 year old youngster then) the Queen & Crescent Railroad Show came to town. A small show it was with one ring, admission 10 and 20¢. There was a side show but no menagerie. It came again in the Spring of 1896. I remember these words on the old yellow handbills passed about town: "Lock up the house, take the babies and follow the street parade to the show grounds and see the free outside exhibition - worth walking miles to witness". I have asked old timers in the circus business but no one was able to remember the title much less the names of the owners or other data.

In the Summer of 1897 the L. B. Lentz Mastodon Railroad Show was here. It was only a stone's throw from our back yard to the circus lot. A small show, one ring performance, 25¢ to all. No menagerie - but they did have a side show with an Oriental Dancer. If I am not mistaken - the old time balloon ascension and parachute leap was given daily at 6 p.m. I do not remember this show giving a parade. In August 1897 also we had the Chas. E. Rice Dog & Pony Show. Small wagon show, one ring, 10 and 20¢. Had performing ponies, dogs, monkeys and goats, trapeze act by lady and gent also a horizontal bar act on the bills as "Trover Bros., experts of horizontal bars". One of these I was told was Floyd Trover, who during the early 1900's was agent of the M. L. Clark & Son Shows. The Chas. E. Rice Show was here also in 1896. In the after show concert a girl sang "Oh Uncle John, Isn't it nice on Broadway" without stretched arms to some yokel in the audience. Rice was from New Albany, Ind., and operated his wagon show only through Southern Indiana those two years.

On May 2, 1902 we had Reed's European Show (A.H. Reed, Owner). A wagon show. Had two-pole big top, one ring. No side show nor menagerie. Admission 10 and 20¢. There was a parade. Show opened with the "May Pole Entry", all performers on horses and ponies in the ring. A lady worked two white horses. There were aerial acts and other ground acts also. A clown, named Charlie Blue. Frank Dempsey was boss canvassman and Burt Bennett, agent. Last named was 24 hour man with Sparks Circus 20 years later. Show was on the road several years and was out of Vernon, Ind.; later A. H. Reed had a moving picture show under canvas.

The Southern Belle Railroad Show opened here August 2-3, 1902. Two pole top, one ring. No side show nor menagerie. A band played up town about 6 p.m. and marched back to the lot with a baton spinner ahead, that could do his stuff. Performance was all small acts. T. J. Oatman owner, his wife performed two well trained horses, one white, one black, latter named "Topsy". Business was not so good here, and am inclined to think the show stranded a few weeks later near St. Louis, Mo.

I saw the Geo. W. Sipe Lilliputian Shows in Louisville, Ky., Summer of 1904. A rail show, patterned after Gentry Bros., Shows. Mostly trained animals. Had a few circus acts, one a family of trick bicycle riders who performed on elevated platform, while the band played an old rollicking circus galop "Horizontal Bars", composed by J. P. Feagans, a circus band leader of Petersburg, Ill. This show gave parades, mostly all tableaux, cages, chariots. Were small in size but ornamental, and nicely carved. Some had mirrored sides and parade had the real circus flourish. The Sipe Show headquarters were in Kokomo, Ind., and show was en route during the early 1900's. Originally the title was Sipe, Dolman & Blake Dog and Pony Show. Geo. W. Sipe was also owner of the Sipe-Theatre in Kokomo, Ind.

Note Sheet No. 19

July 15th, 1945.

THE ORIGINAL RUSSELL BROS. CIRCUS - Season 1913

As told to Cliff Cowen CHS. by Albert Bailey, who was on the Wild West Show Concert of this circus 1913 - 14 and 15.

This overland wagon show was put out on the road and owned by "Hi Bob" Russell, an old time circus clown and juggler. It opened on the first day of April at Sebrell, Va., and was out until the tenth day of January of the next year, a very long season.

There were two very unusual facts about this mud show, one was; that in all its long season it did not go out of the State of Virginia, and the other was; that there was no power, motors, or machinery of any sort except that which was furnished by the men, mules and horses.

Travelling cross country and playing in small villages, cross roads, blacksmith shops and the like, the circus folk once saw two weeks go by without seeing a railroad.

Very little is remembered about the acts or the performers on this show, however a parade was given daily with two light cage wagons drawn by one horse each, ponies, horses and mules and a manually operated calliope or organ mounted on a light wagon pulled by one horse.

When the parade was concluded the wagon with the organ was put inside the main tent and a long handle was extended through the canvas through a specially cut hole. Thereafter throughout the performance workmen took turns furnishing the juice or power for the music from the outside. For illumination the show had old time carbide lamps to light the evening performance.

The rolling stock consisted of a ticket wagon with a two horse team, a pole wagon with a four or six horse team (depending on the weather) a cook house wagon pulled by a team of mules, the above mentioned light spring cage wagons drawn by one horse apiece, and a canvas wagon with roll top and sides pulled by a two horse team. There was also a bed wagon or sleeper pulled by one team. One extra snake team was handy for pulling in mud.

This was a one ring circus with a sixty foot top. Albert Bailey had the Wild West after show and featured fancy roping and whip cracking.

TROUPEING
ON THE OLD SHOWS

Harry P. Parkhurst, well known ex-trouper of Peru, Ind., writes as follows: "I had a great uncle Sylvester Parkhurst, who travelled with wagon shows through the East. He was with Cooper & Whitby and the Sloat Shepard Circus. Then my father, W.B. Parkhurst, better known among circus folks as Bandwagon Dad, travelled with G.G. Grady, Van Amburg, Cooper & Jackson, Montgomery Queen, Miles Orton, Burr Robbins, Wallace & Co., and J. H. LaPearl. Dad drove the bandteam when the Wallace & Co. first opened in Peru, Ind., in the Spring of 1884. My father's brother travelled with the G.G. Grady, Van Amburg and Wallace & Co., shows. My brother Henry E. Parkhurst (Better known as Doc) was on the Miles Orgon, Cooper & Jackson, Sells Bros., Burr Robbins, W.W. Cole, Bob Hunting, Fisher & Akin, J. H. LaPearl, Gollmar Bros., John Robinson, Wood Bros. Dog & Pony Show, Frank A. Robbins, Norris & Rowe, Sipe Dallman and Blake Dog & Pony Show. As for myself - I trouped on the Great Wallace Circus, Siebert & Barry, W. D. Reynolds, Adam Forepaugh, Darnum & Bailey, W. L. Main, J. H. LaPearl, John Robinson, Campbell Bros., and other small shows. Then my son Harry Jr. became a circus decorator. I really think that is enough circus in one family".

Don't you think that is some record for one family. Many unusual titles are mentioned in these lists of names, and they should give members "something to hunt for".

BEST WISHES FOR 1945

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MRS. IONE STEVENS

CHS 126

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